

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 180146Z MAR 76
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6372
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 1061

EXDIS

CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UN, SF, AO, US

SUBJ: MEETING WITH SOUTH AFRICAN PERMREP BOTHA, MARCH 17

1. AFTER URGENT SOUTH AFRICAN REQUEST, PERMREP BOTHA CALLED ON AMB BENNETT AT USUN, AFTERNOON MARCH 17. BOTHA'S MAIN INTEREST CONCERNED THE TIMING OF SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON SOUTH AFRICAN "AGGRESSION" IN ANGOLA. ALTHOUGH WE HAD HOPED THAT BOTHA WOULD BE BRINGING NEWS THAT MIGHT FORESTALL SUCH A DEBATE, THIS WAS NOT THE CASE.

2. INSTEAD, BOTHA INSISTED UPON THE LEGALITY OF THE ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS ARE PROTECTING WHAT HE SAID WERE THE 2,000-3,000 SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS NOW ON THE CUNENE DAM PROJECT. SUCH PRESENCE OF TROOPS WAS AN IMPLICIT OUTGROWTH OF THE ORIGINAL PROJECT ARRANGEMENT WITH PORTUGAL, ACCORDING TO BOTHA. HE ASSERTED THAT MPLA ITSELF HAD NOT OBJECTED TO THEIR PRESENCE AND SAID THAT, DESPITE REPORTS BY SENATOR TUNNEY'S STAFFERS, LUANDA AUTHORITIES HAD MADE NO EFFORT TO CONTACT PRETORIA. FOR ITS PART, THE SAG "DID NOT INTEND
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TO CRAWL" TO MAKE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE MPLA.

3. BOTHA ADDED THAT HE HAD THOUGHT SOUTH AFRICA'S ANNOUNCEMENT OVER THE PAST WEEKEND, TO THE EFFECT THAT IT WAS WITHDRAWING TROOPS FROM REFUGEE CAMPS BY MARCH 27 AND THAT TROOPS WOULD LEAVE THE DAM PROJECT UPON RECEIVING GUARANTEES THAT WORKERS THERE WOULD BE PROTECTED, WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT TO CAUSE THE CANCELLATION OF SECURITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION. AMB BENNETT REPLIED THAT ALTHOUGH AFRICANS AT UN WERE QUITE AWARE OF SAG ANNOUNCEMENT, AFRICAN GROUP CHAIRMAN MAINA (KENYA) HAD TOLD HIM JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE THAT THE AFRICANS WANTED THE SC TO MEET ON ANGOLA, BEGINNING MARCH 22. MAINA HAD SPECIFICALLY REJECTED SAG ANNOUNCEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL BY MARCH 27 AS BEING OF ANY CONSEQUENCE. THERE WAS STILL SOME UNCERTAINTY ABOUT WHEN ANGOLA WOULD BE TAKEN UP BY SC, BUT THAT WAS THE POSITION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN GROUP. BOTHA THEN STATED THAT HE WOULD TRY TO PREPARE A LETTER TO SYG SETTING FORTH HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. HE ASKED WHETHER WE BELIEVED HE SHOULD SPEAK IN THE SC DEBATE, AND WE SAID WE WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE THAT DECISION TO HIM. WOULD THE US VETO A RESOLUTION COMDEMNING SOUTH AFRICA ALONE?, BOTHA ASKED. BENNETT REPLIED THAT WE HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS AS YET CONCERNING THIS, AND THAT IT PROBABLY WAS PREMATURE TO CONSIDER THAT QUESTION.

4. BOTHA, INSISTING THAT SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC OPINION WOULD VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED THE ABANDONMENT OF THEIR 5 MILLION RAND A MONTH INVESTMENT IN THE DAM WITHOUT PROTECTION, VOLUNTEERED THAT HE HIMSELF HAD PLAYED A ROLE IN INFLUENCING PRETORIA'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW FORCES FROM REFUGEE CAMPS.

5. LASTLY, BOTHA TOLD US, STRICTLY CONFIDENTIALLY, THAT HE HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH PORTUGUESE PERMREP GALVAO TELES CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF PORTUGUESE AND MPLA TOGETHER OFFERING PROTECTION FOR THE WORKERS. BOTHA HAS NOT YET HEARD BACK FROM THE PORTUGUESE. WHEN WE ASKED WHETHER THE CONSORTIUM INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT COULD NOT SECURE ITS OWN PROVATE PROTECTION, BOTHA SIGNED AND SAID, "THERE'S JUST NOT ENOUGH TIME."

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